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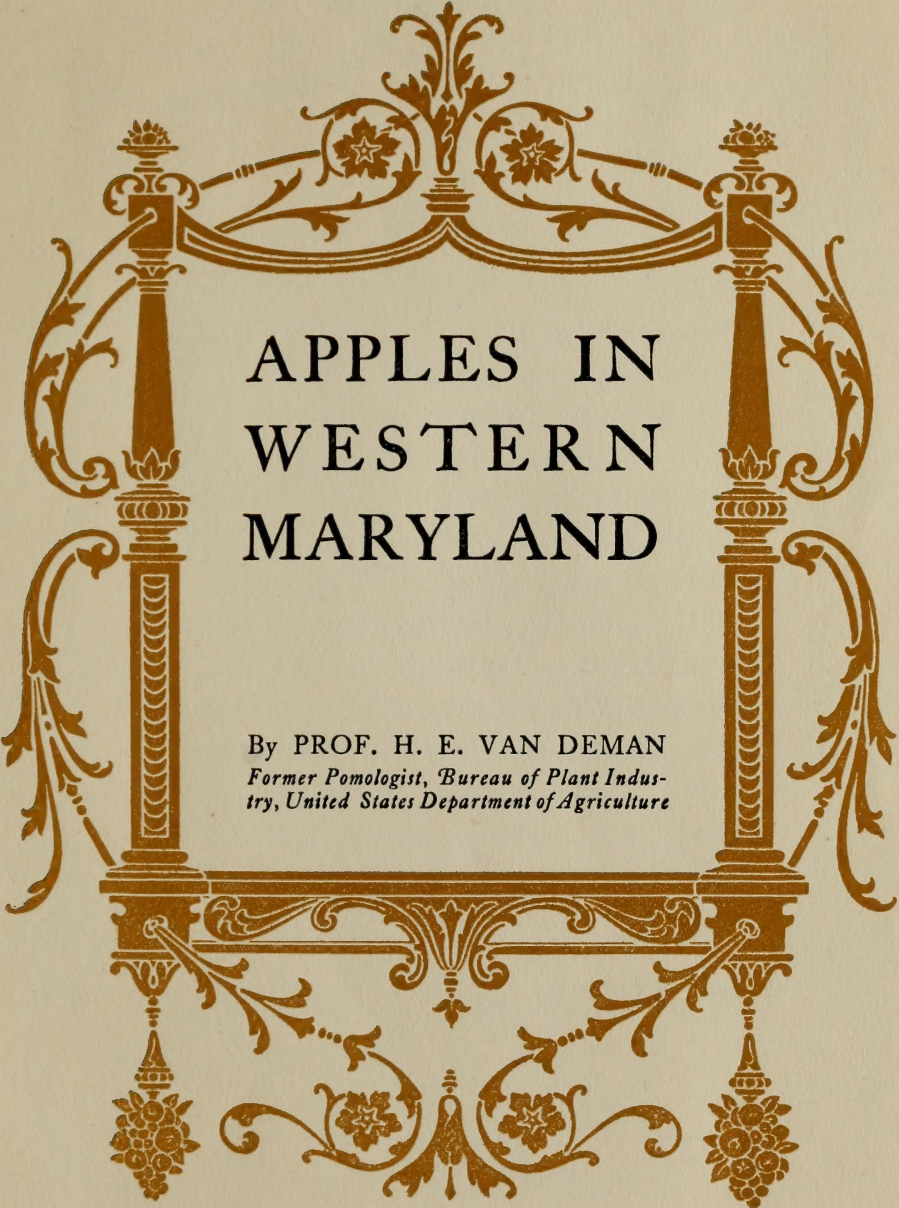
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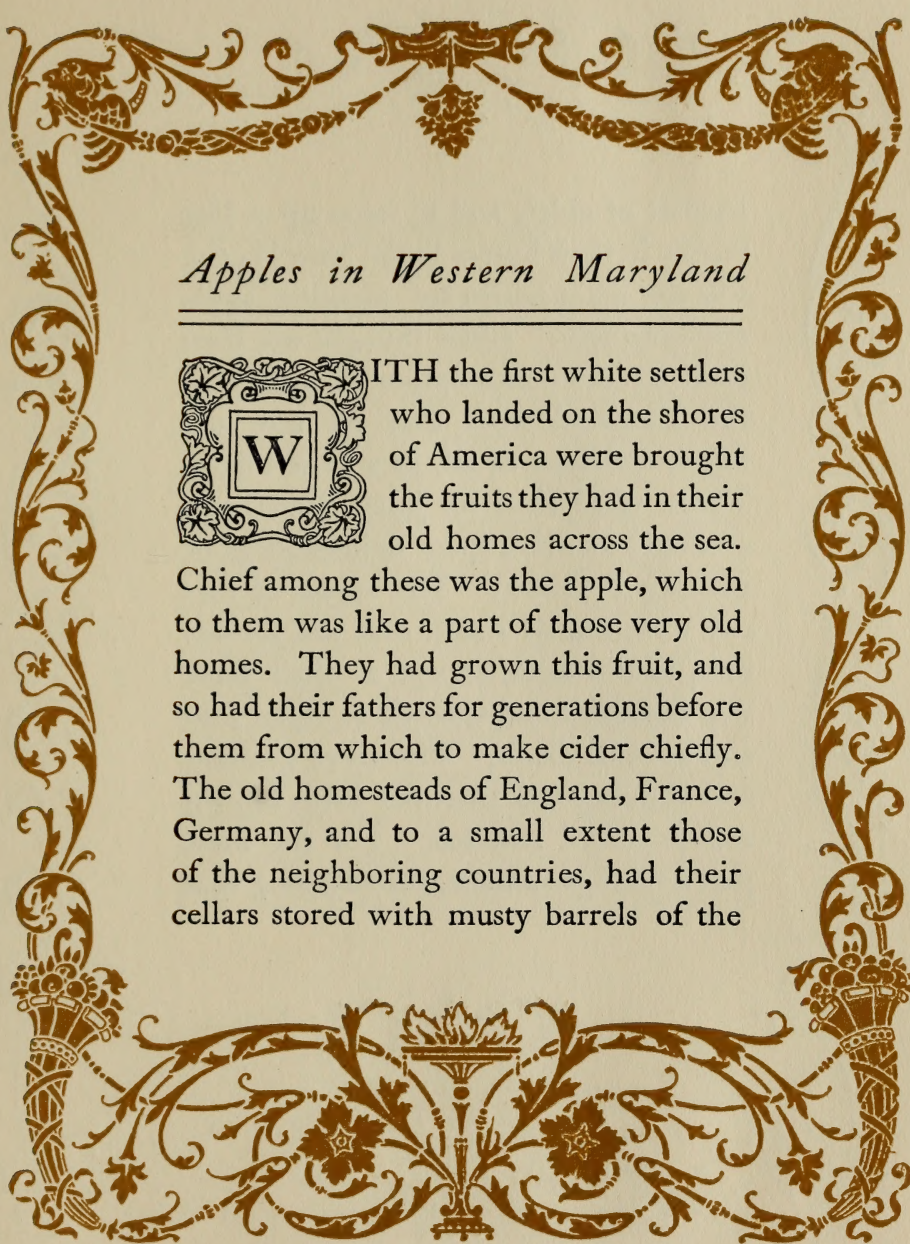


APPLES IN WESTERN MARYLAND

By PROF. H. E. VAN DEMAN
*Former Pomologist, Bureau of Plant Indus-
try, United States Department of Agriculture*

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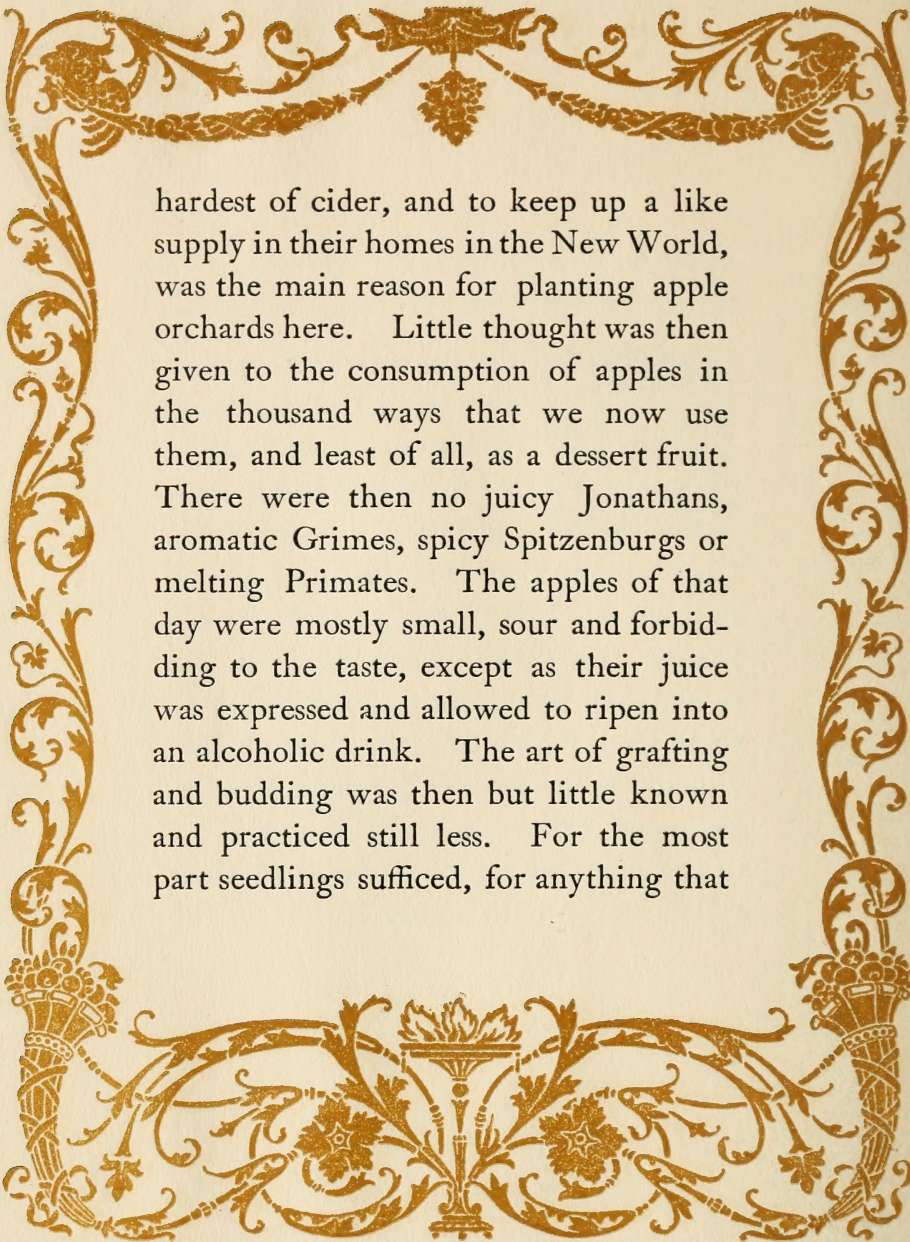
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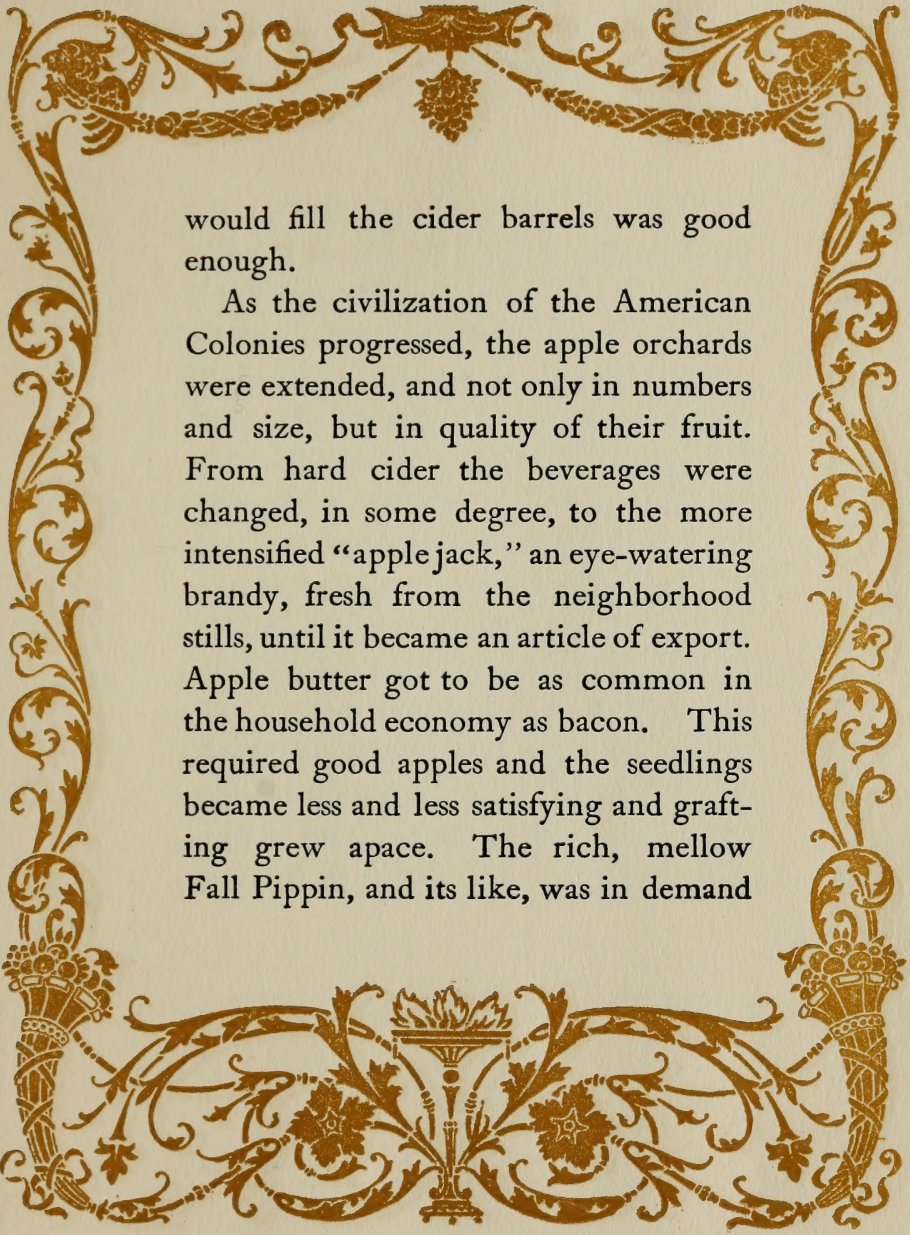
Apples in Western Maryland



WITH the first white settlers who landed on the shores of America were brought the fruits they had in their old homes across the sea. Chief among these was the apple, which to them was like a part of those very old homes. They had grown this fruit, and so had their fathers for generations before them from which to make cider chiefly. The old homesteads of England, France, Germany, and to a small extent those of the neighboring countries, had their cellars stored with musty barrels of the

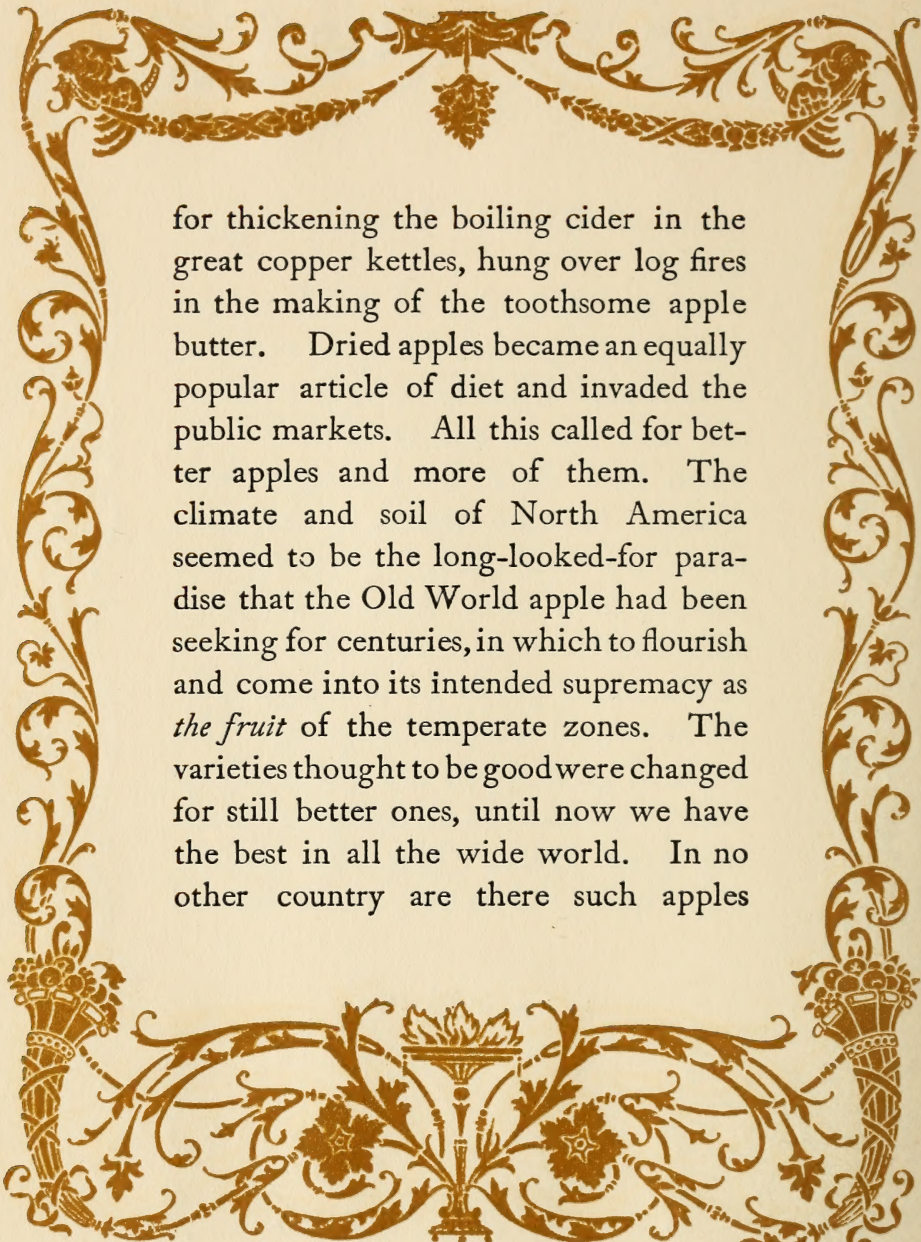


hardest of cider, and to keep up a like supply in their homes in the New World, was the main reason for planting apple orchards here. Little thought was then given to the consumption of apples in the thousand ways that we now use them, and least of all, as a dessert fruit. There were then no juicy Jonathans, aromatic Grimes, spicy Spitzenburgs or melting Primates. The apples of that day were mostly small, sour and forbidding to the taste, except as their juice was expressed and allowed to ripen into an alcoholic drink. The art of grafting and budding was then but little known and practiced still less. For the most part seedlings sufficed, for anything that

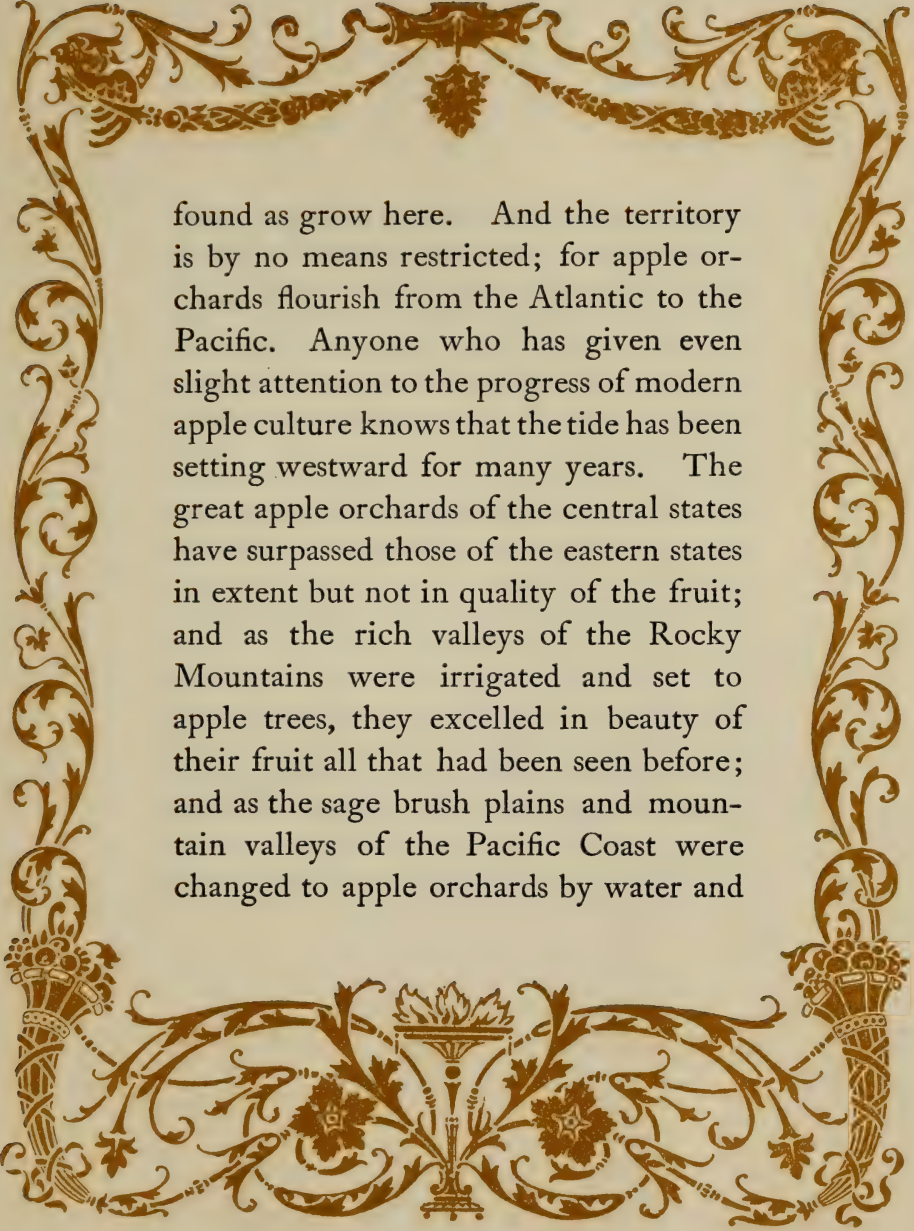


would fill the cider barrels was good enough.

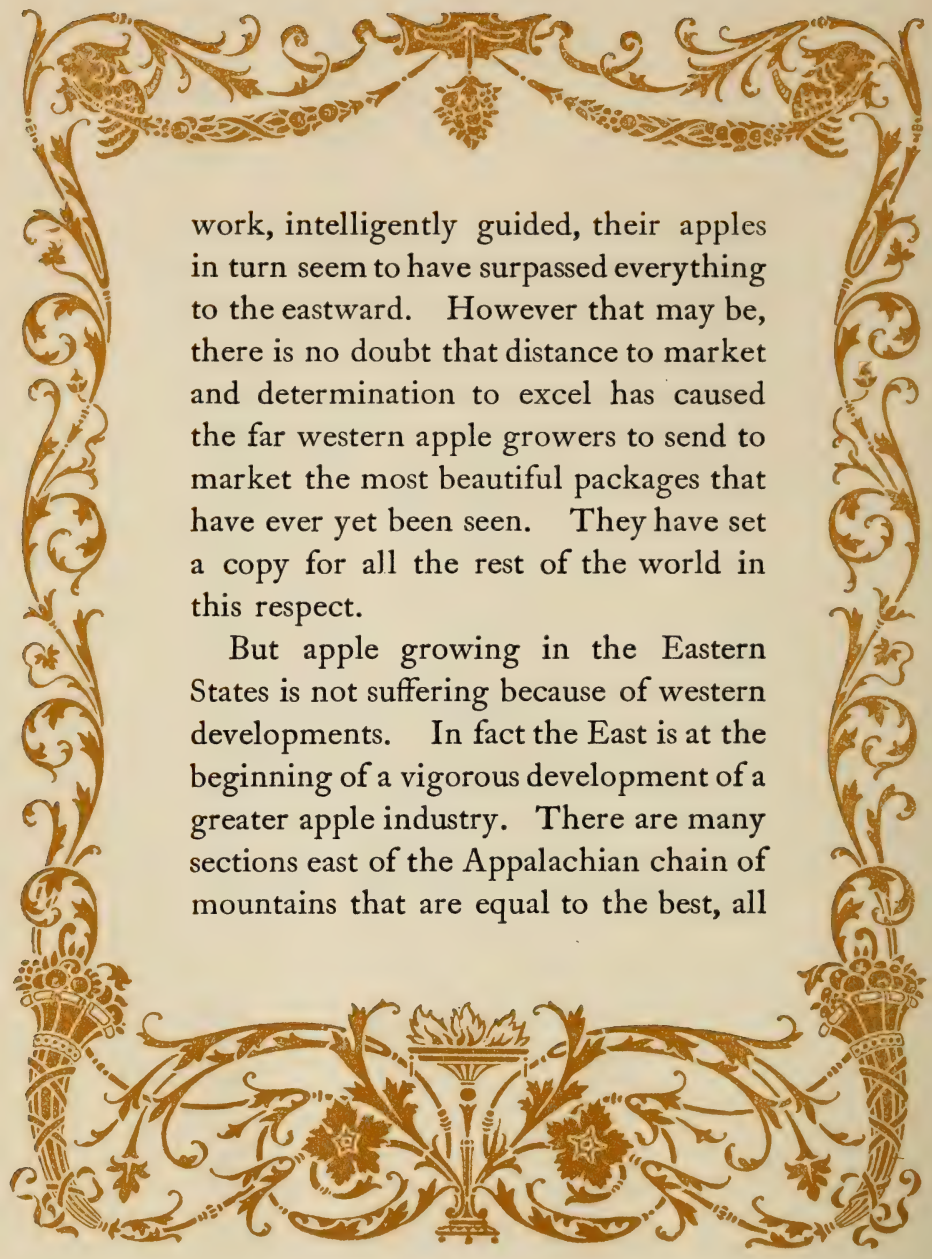
As the civilization of the American Colonies progressed, the apple orchards were extended, and not only in numbers and size, but in quality of their fruit. From hard cider the beverages were changed, in some degree, to the more intensified "apple jack," an eye-watering brandy, fresh from the neighborhood stills, until it became an article of export. Apple butter got to be as common in the household economy as bacon. This required good apples and the seedlings became less and less satisfying and grafting grew apace. The rich, mellow Fall Pippin, and its like, was in demand



for thickening the boiling cider in the great copper kettles, hung over log fires in the making of the toothsome apple butter. Dried apples became an equally popular article of diet and invaded the public markets. All this called for better apples and more of them. The climate and soil of North America seemed to be the long-looked-for paradise that the Old World apple had been seeking for centuries, in which to flourish and come into its intended supremacy as *the fruit* of the temperate zones. The varieties thought to be good were changed for still better ones, until now we have the best in all the wide world. In no other country are there such apples

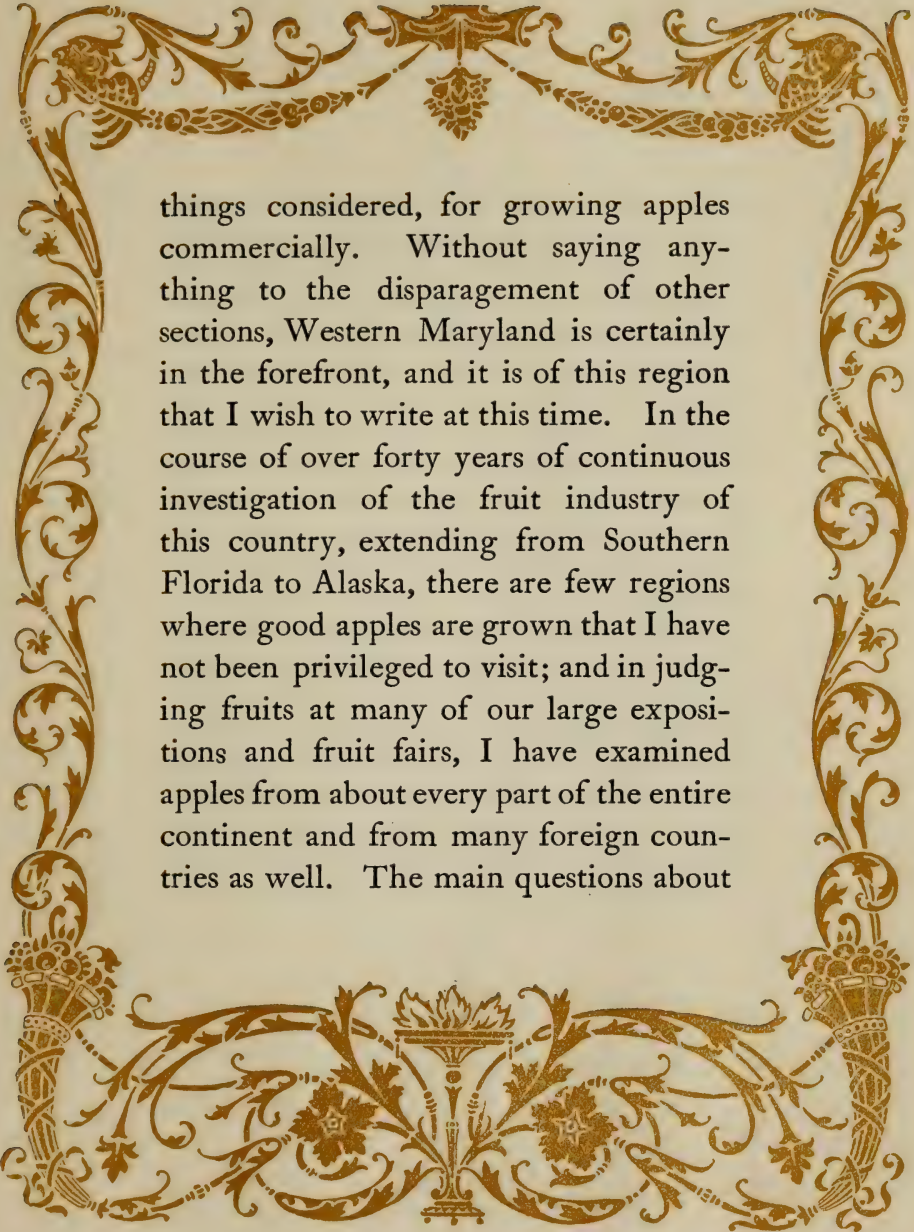


found as grow here. And the territory is by no means restricted; for apple orchards flourish from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Anyone who has given even slight attention to the progress of modern apple culture knows that the tide has been setting westward for many years. The great apple orchards of the central states have surpassed those of the eastern states in extent but not in quality of the fruit; and as the rich valleys of the Rocky Mountains were irrigated and set to apple trees, they excelled in beauty of their fruit all that had been seen before; and as the sage brush plains and mountain valleys of the Pacific Coast were changed to apple orchards by water and

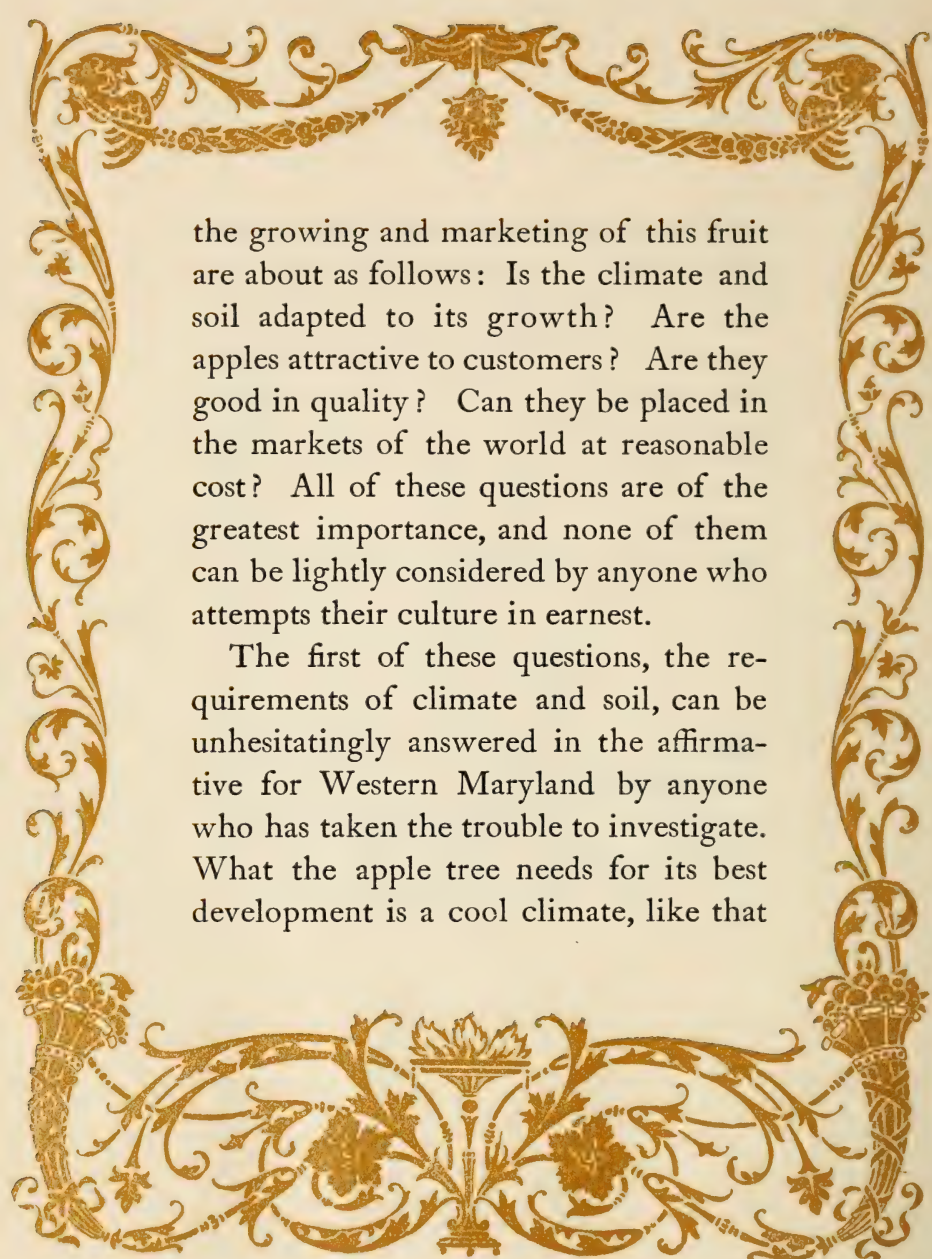


work, intelligently guided, their apples in turn seem to have surpassed everything to the eastward. However that may be, there is no doubt that distance to market and determination to excel has caused the far western apple growers to send to market the most beautiful packages that have ever yet been seen. They have set a copy for all the rest of the world in this respect.

But apple growing in the Eastern States is not suffering because of western developments. In fact the East is at the beginning of a vigorous development of a greater apple industry. There are many sections east of the Appalachian chain of mountains that are equal to the best, all

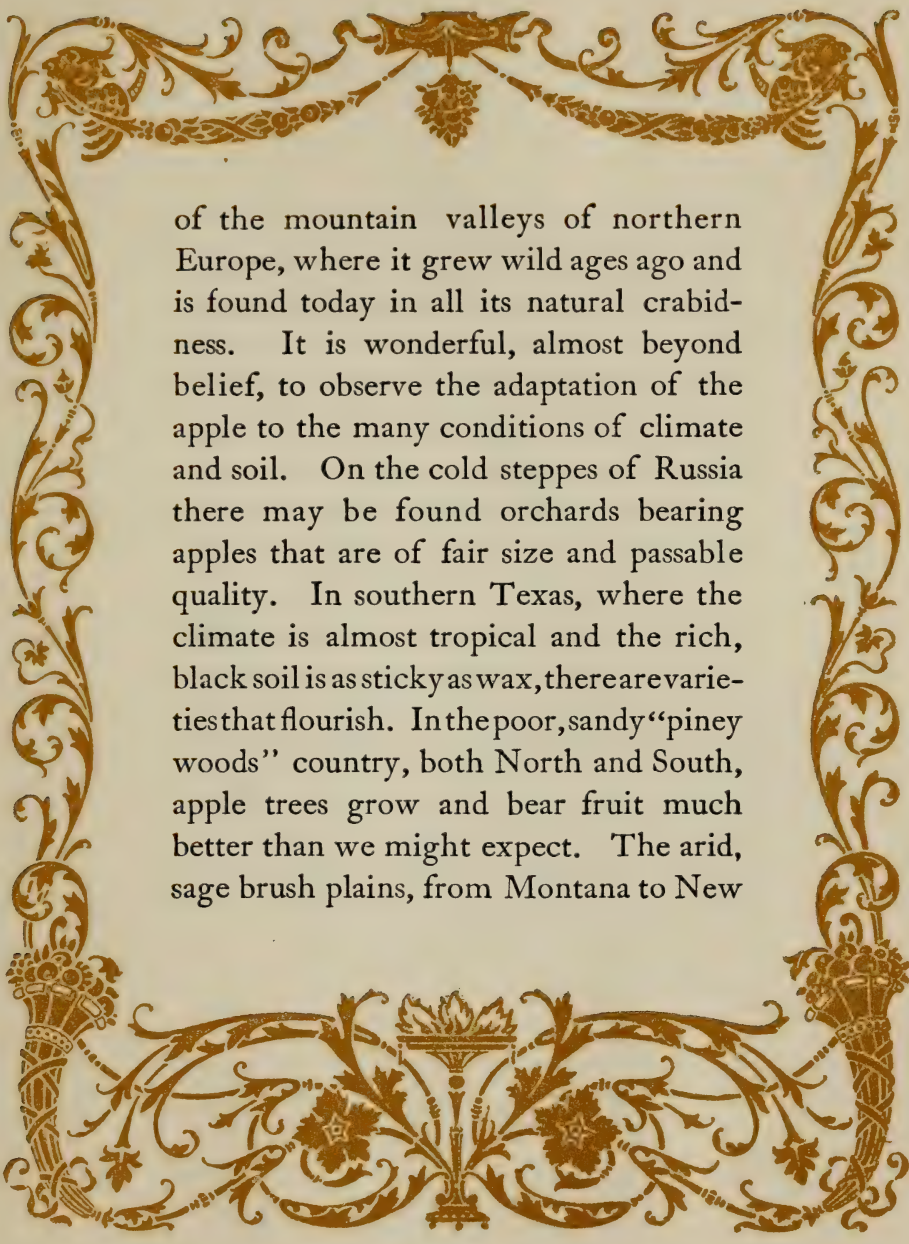


things considered, for growing apples commercially. Without saying anything to the disparagement of other sections, Western Maryland is certainly in the forefront, and it is of this region that I wish to write at this time. In the course of over forty years of continuous investigation of the fruit industry of this country, extending from Southern Florida to Alaska, there are few regions where good apples are grown that I have not been privileged to visit; and in judging fruits at many of our large expositions and fruit fairs, I have examined apples from about every part of the entire continent and from many foreign countries as well. The main questions about

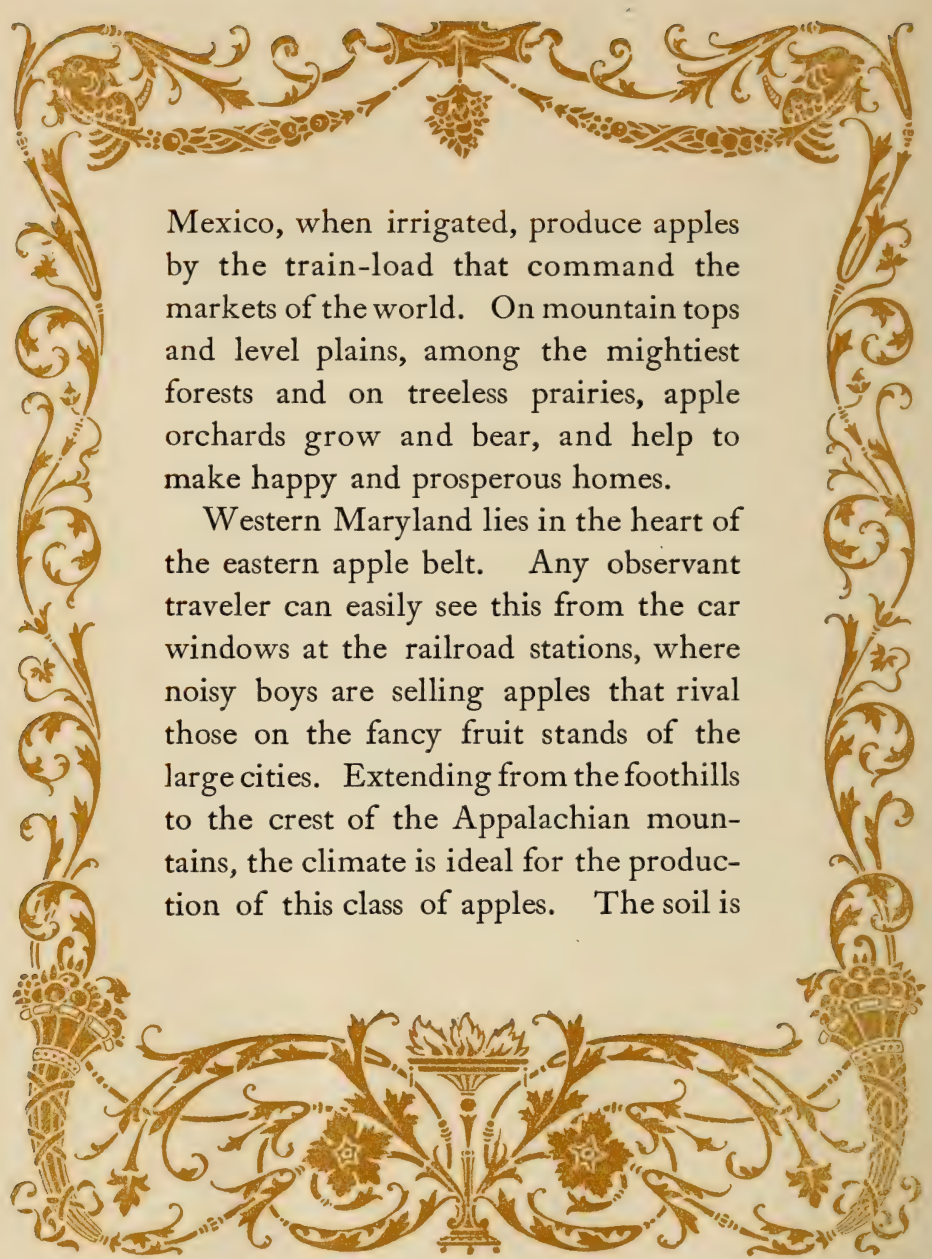


the growing and marketing of this fruit are about as follows: Is the climate and soil adapted to its growth? Are the apples attractive to customers? Are they good in quality? Can they be placed in the markets of the world at reasonable cost? All of these questions are of the greatest importance, and none of them can be lightly considered by anyone who attempts their culture in earnest.

The first of these questions, the requirements of climate and soil, can be unhesitatingly answered in the affirmative for Western Maryland by anyone who has taken the trouble to investigate. What the apple tree needs for its best development is a cool climate, like that

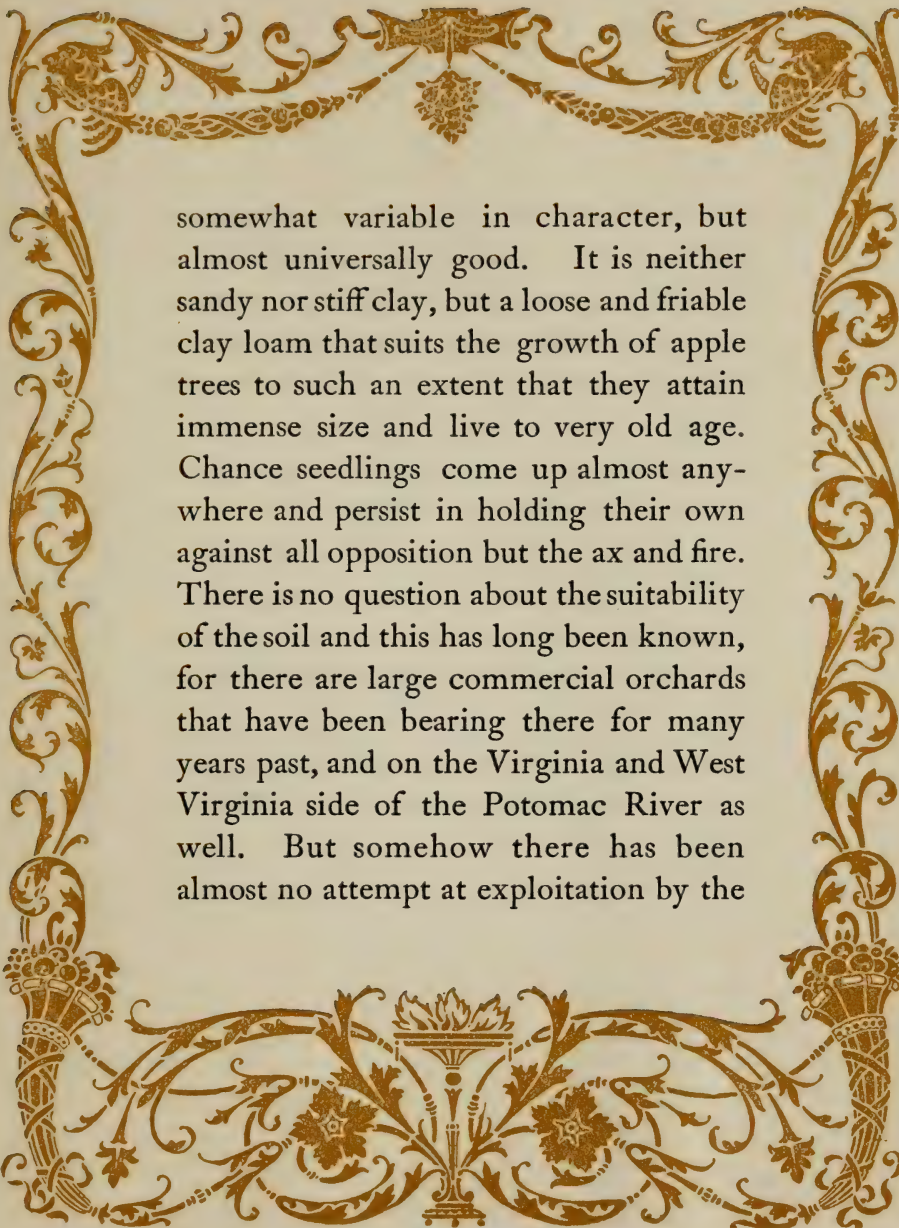


of the mountain valleys of northern Europe, where it grew wild ages ago and is found today in all its natural crabdiness. It is wonderful, almost beyond belief, to observe the adaptation of the apple to the many conditions of climate and soil. On the cold steppes of Russia there may be found orchards bearing apples that are of fair size and passable quality. In southern Texas, where the climate is almost tropical and the rich, black soil is as sticky as wax, there are varieties that flourish. In the poor, sandy "piney woods" country, both North and South, apple trees grow and bear fruit much better than we might expect. The arid, sage brush plains, from Montana to New

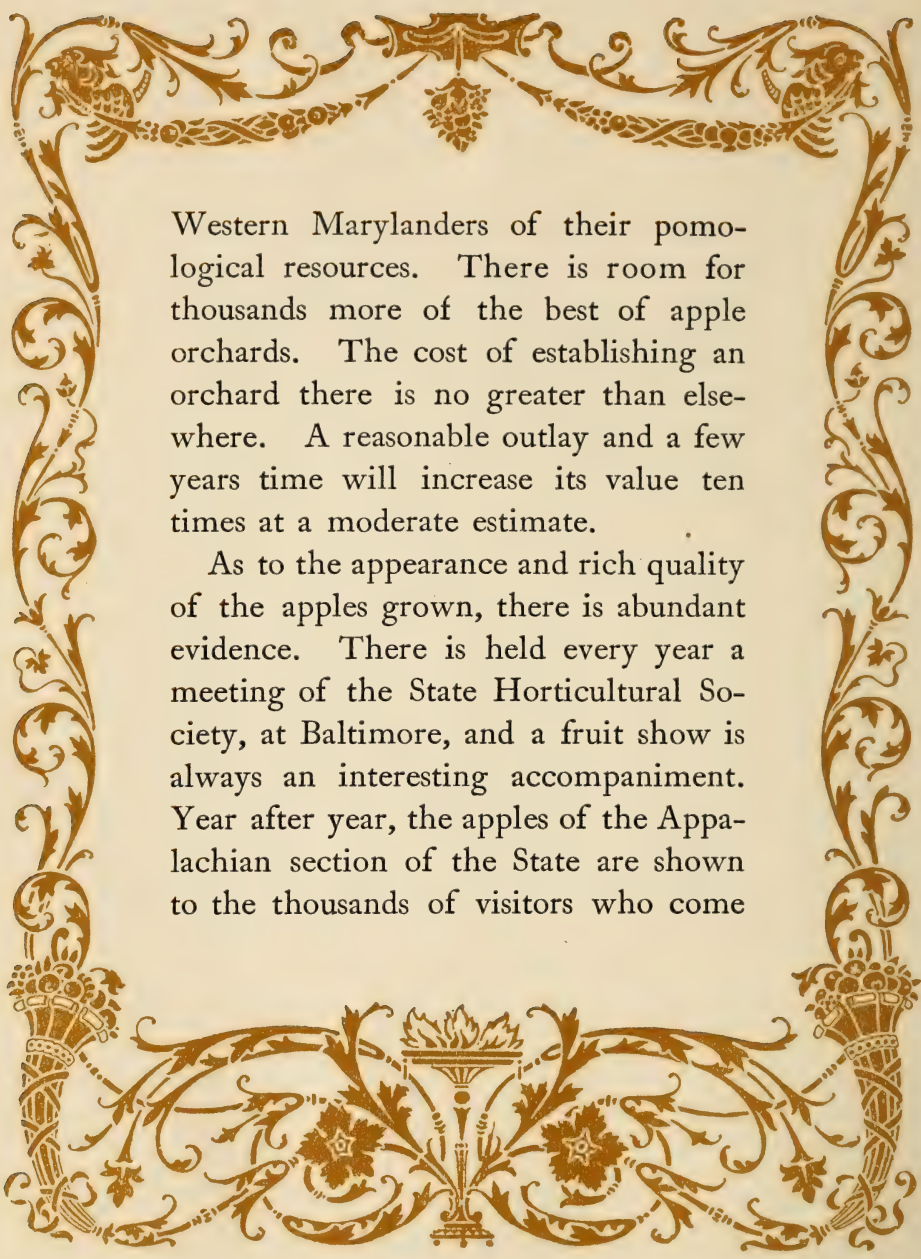


Mexico, when irrigated, produce apples by the train-load that command the markets of the world. On mountain tops and level plains, among the mightiest forests and on treeless prairies, apple orchards grow and bear, and help to make happy and prosperous homes.

Western Maryland lies in the heart of the eastern apple belt. Any observant traveler can easily see this from the car windows at the railroad stations, where noisy boys are selling apples that rival those on the fancy fruit stands of the large cities. Extending from the foothills to the crest of the Appalachian mountains, the climate is ideal for the production of this class of apples. The soil is

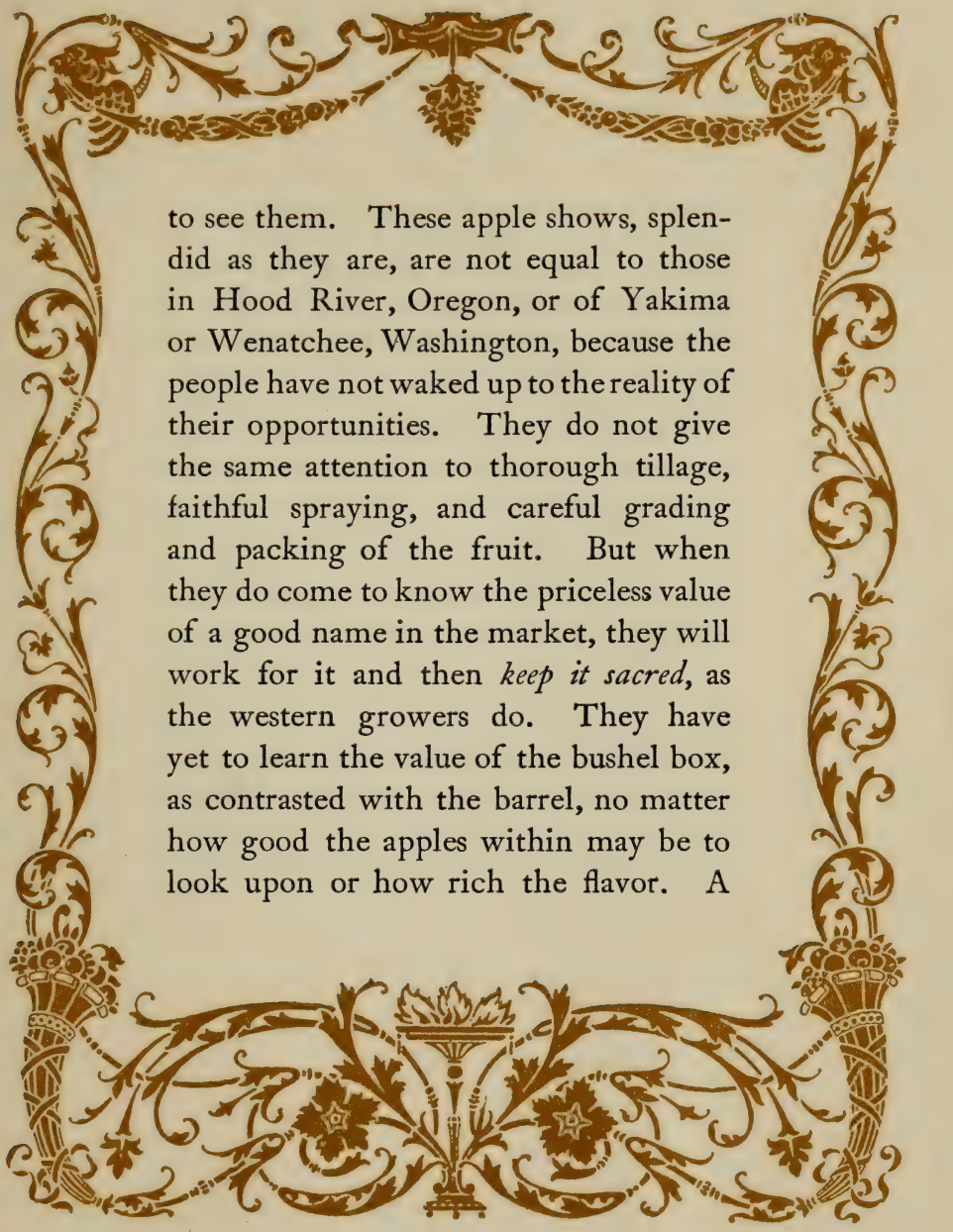


somewhat variable in character, but almost universally good. It is neither sandy nor stiff clay, but a loose and friable clay loam that suits the growth of apple trees to such an extent that they attain immense size and live to very old age. Chance seedlings come up almost anywhere and persist in holding their own against all opposition but the ax and fire. There is no question about the suitability of the soil and this has long been known, for there are large commercial orchards that have been bearing there for many years past, and on the Virginia and West Virginia side of the Potomac River as well. But somehow there has been almost no attempt at exploitation by the

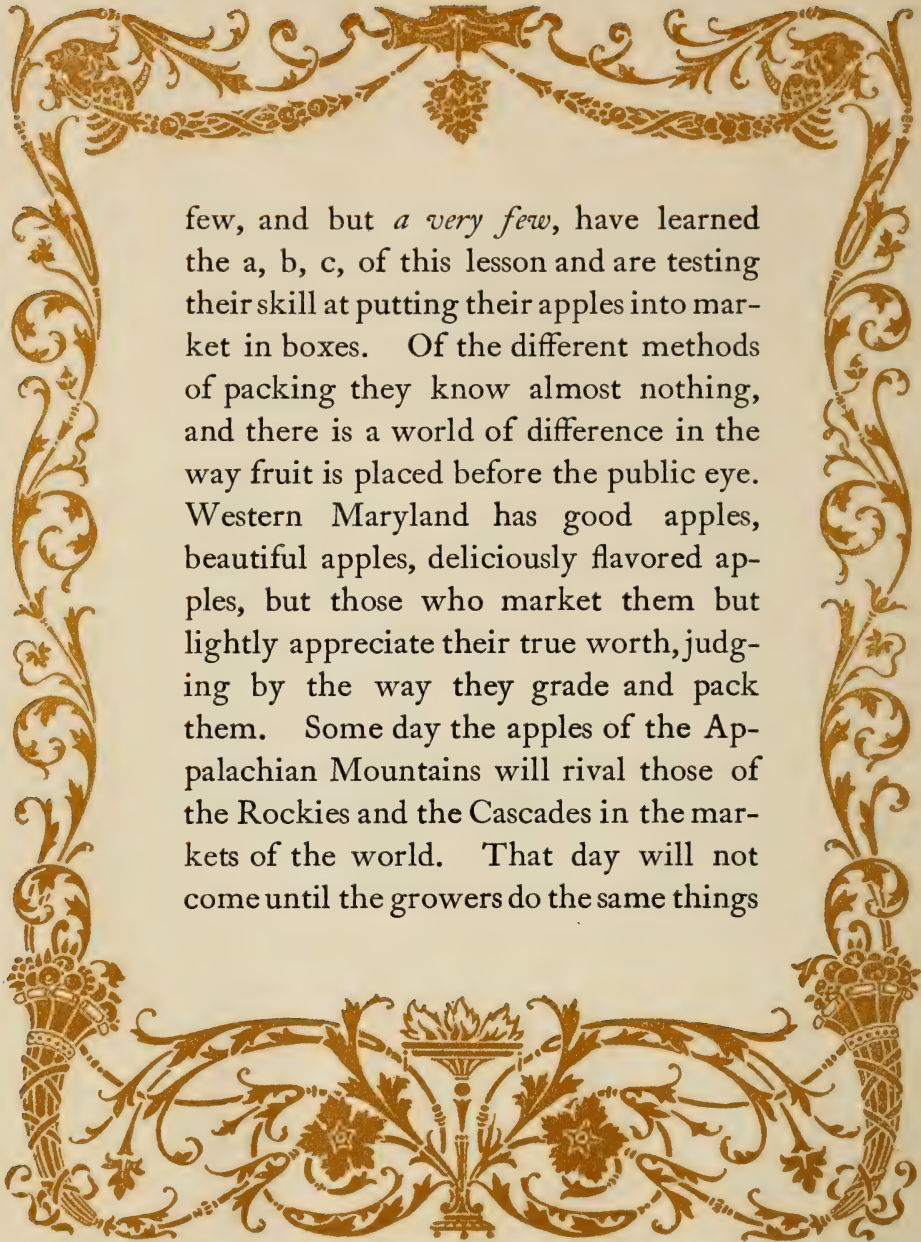


Western Marylanders of their pomological resources. There is room for thousands more of the best of apple orchards. The cost of establishing an orchard there is no greater than elsewhere. A reasonable outlay and a few years time will increase its value ten times at a moderate estimate.

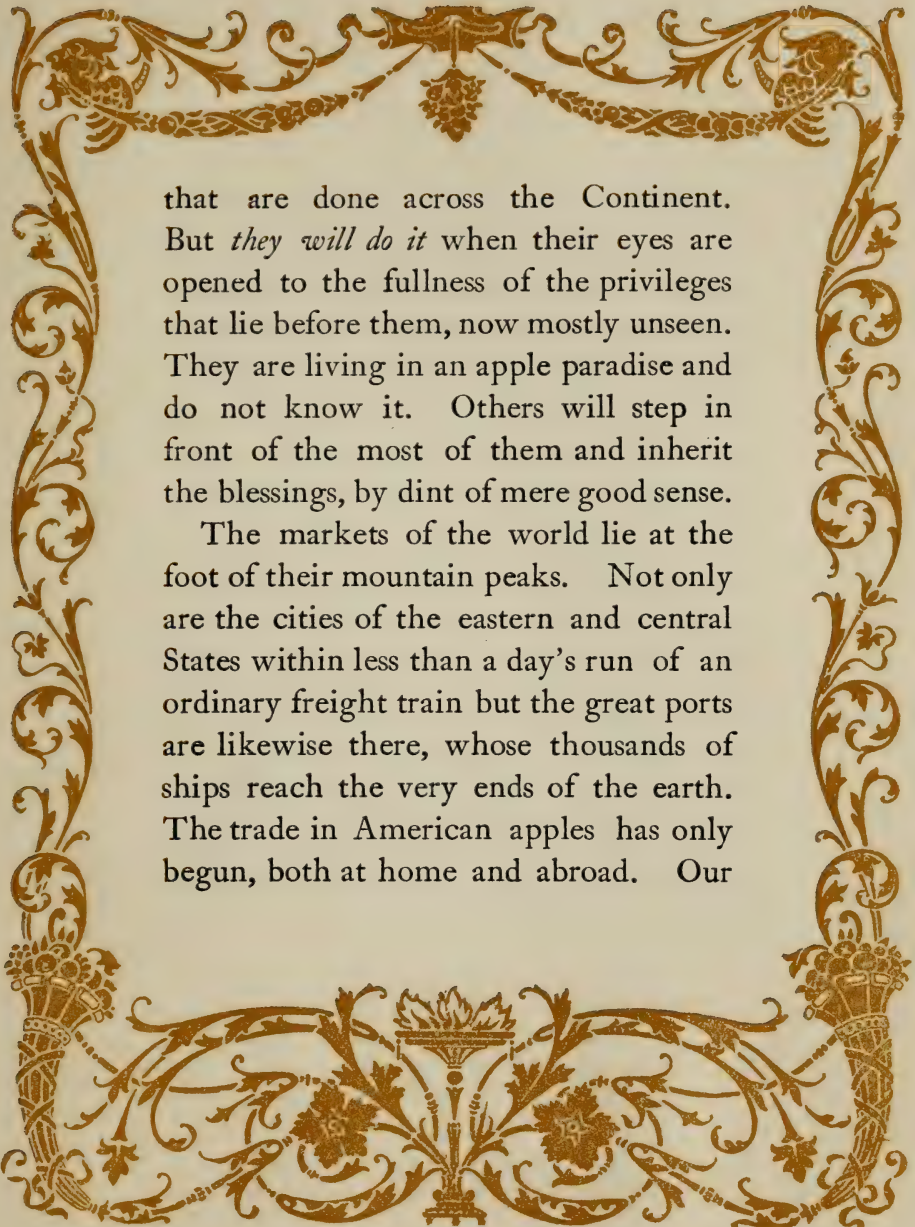
As to the appearance and rich quality of the apples grown, there is abundant evidence. There is held every year a meeting of the State Horticultural Society, at Baltimore, and a fruit show is always an interesting accompaniment. Year after year, the apples of the Appalachian section of the State are shown to the thousands of visitors who come



to see them. These apple shows, splendid as they are, are not equal to those in Hood River, Oregon, or of Yakima or Wenatchee, Washington, because the people have not waked up to the reality of their opportunities. They do not give the same attention to thorough tillage, faithful spraying, and careful grading and packing of the fruit. But when they do come to know the priceless value of a good name in the market, they will work for it and then *keep it sacred*, as the western growers do. They have yet to learn the value of the bushel box, as contrasted with the barrel, no matter how good the apples within may be to look upon or how rich the flavor. A

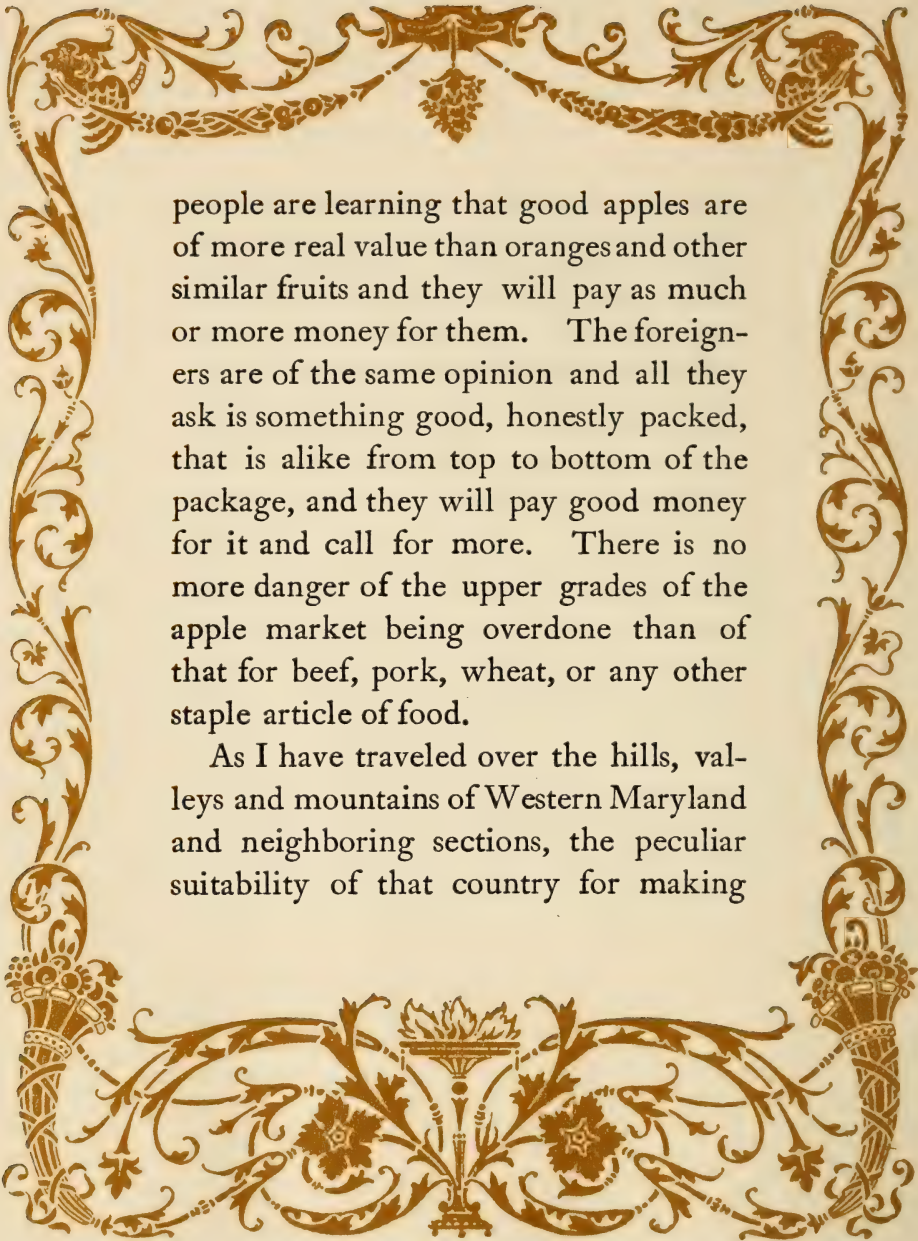


few, and but *a very few*, have learned the a, b, c, of this lesson and are testing their skill at putting their apples into market in boxes. Of the different methods of packing they know almost nothing, and there is a world of difference in the way fruit is placed before the public eye. Western Maryland has good apples, beautiful apples, deliciously flavored apples, but those who market them but lightly appreciate their true worth, judging by the way they grade and pack them. Some day the apples of the Appalachian Mountains will rival those of the Rockies and the Cascades in the markets of the world. That day will not come until the growers do the same things



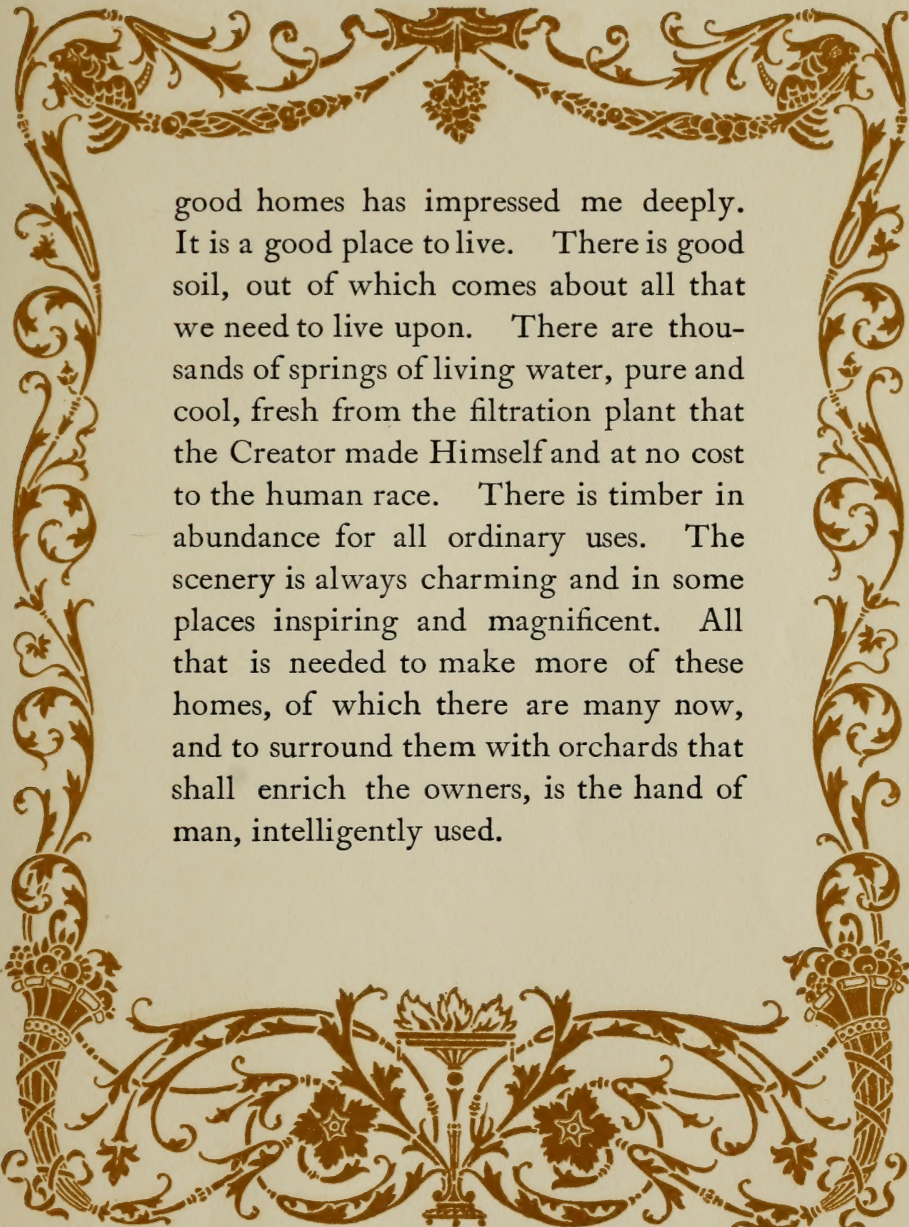
that are done across the Continent. But *they will do it* when their eyes are opened to the fullness of the privileges that lie before them, now mostly unseen. They are living in an apple paradise and do not know it. Others will step in front of the most of them and inherit the blessings, by dint of mere good sense.

The markets of the world lie at the foot of their mountain peaks. Not only are the cities of the eastern and central States within less than a day's run of an ordinary freight train but the great ports are likewise there, whose thousands of ships reach the very ends of the earth. The trade in American apples has only begun, both at home and abroad. Our



people are learning that good apples are of more real value than oranges and other similar fruits and they will pay as much or more money for them. The foreigners are of the same opinion and all they ask is something good, honestly packed, that is alike from top to bottom of the package, and they will pay good money for it and call for more. There is no more danger of the upper grades of the apple market being overdone than of that for beef, pork, wheat, or any other staple article of food.

As I have traveled over the hills, valleys and mountains of Western Maryland and neighboring sections, the peculiar suitability of that country for making



good homes has impressed me deeply. It is a good place to live. There is good soil, out of which comes about all that we need to live upon. There are thousands of springs of living water, pure and cool, fresh from the filtration plant that the Creator made Himself and at no cost to the human race. There is timber in abundance for all ordinary uses. The scenery is always charming and in some places inspiring and magnificent. All that is needed to make more of these homes, of which there are many now, and to surround them with orchards that shall enrich the owners, is the hand of man, intelligently used.

